

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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P R 101010 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1855

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TELAVIV

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ROME

USUN NEW YORK 024

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

S E C R E T SANAA 374

EXDIS

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, YE, ET, IS

SUBJECT: ALLEGED ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ZUQAR ISLAND

RDF: ADDIS ABABA 2650 (NOTAL)

1. ACCORDING DEPUTY PRIMIN/ FONMIN NU' MAN, ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR FITAWRARI SIRAGE CALLED ON HIM MARCH 9 TO CONVEY IEG' S UNQUALIFIED ASSURANCE THAT NO ISRAELI INSTALLATION EXISTS ON ZUQAR ISLAND. THEREFORE, YARG RECONNAISSANCE OF THIS ETHIOPIAN ISLAND WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY. NU' MAN REPLIED THAT IT REMAINS YARG' S INTENTION SATISFY ITSELF THAT THERE NO ISRAELI PRESENCE ON ISLAND. HE CONTESTED IEG' S POSITION THAT ZUQAR IS ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY, POINTED OUT PROXIMITY TO YEMENI SHORE, HISTORICAL LINKS OF ZUQAR WITH YEMEN, ETC. HE SAID IT RIDICULOUS FOR
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TWO STATES WITH SUCH IDENTITY OF INTERESTS AS ETHIOPIA AND YEMEN ALLOW UNRESOLVED STATUS OF A HANDFUL OF ESSENTIALLY UNINHABITED ISLANDS DISTURB THEIR RELATIONSHIP. IT HIGH TIME FOR IEG AND YARG BEGIN FRIENDLY, QUIET NEGOTIATION TO RESOLVE QUESTIONS OF SOVEREIGNTY ONCE AND FOR ALL. THIS WAS SPIRIT OF YARG' S APPROACH TO PROBLEM.

2. CONFIDENTIALLY, FONMIN ASSURES US YARG INTENDS HOLD UP ITS SIDE OF ARGUMENT ON QUESTION OF ZUQAR SOVEREIGNTY IN AMICABLE DISCUSSION WITH IEG, BUT HAS NO INTENTION OF CREATING ANY SORT OF INCIDENT. YARG RECONNAISSANCE OF ZUQAR, OF WHICH FONMIN HAD SPOKEN TO US EARLIER (SANAA 343), LIKELY CONSIST OF SAIL PAST ISLAND BY FISHING VESSEL TO SEE IF THERE ANY SIGN OF UNUSUAL ACTIVITY.

3. COMMENT: OBJECT OF THIS EXERCISE IN TERMS OF USG INTEREST WOULD SEEM TO HAVE BEEN ESSENTIALLY ACHIEVED: TWO FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN FOREWARNED OF A POSSIBLE STORY WHICH, ALTHOUGH (AS WE HAVE CAUTIONED YARG FROM OUTSET) IN ALL PROBABILITY ENTIRELY WITHOUT FOUNDATION, WOULD HAVE CAUSED EMBARRASSMENT AND TENSION HAD IT TAKEN THEM BY SURPRISE. WHILE NOT IN AGREEMENT ON SOVEREIGNTY OF ZUQAR AND OTHER ISLANDS, THEY ARE IN FRIENDLY CONTACT WITH ONE ANOTHER TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO THEIR RELATIONS. USG HAS DISARMED SUSPICION WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN INEVITABLE IN YEMENI MINDS THAT IT LINKED TO OR AWARE OF ALLEGED ISRAELI ACTIVITY, THUS PROTECTING OUR OWN RELATIONS. CRAWFORD

NOTE BY OC/ T: NOT PASSED CAIRO

SECRET

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** EXDIS

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANAA00374
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SANAA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730325/aaaahlrl.tel
Line Count: 101
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Sep-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <16-Nov-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 971118
Subject: ALLEGED ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF ZUQAR ISLAND RDF: ADDIS ABABA 2650 (NOTAL)
TAGS: PBOR, ET, IS, YE
To: ADDIS ABABA
AMMAN
ASMARA
JERUSALEM
JIDDA
ROME
SECSTATE WASHDC

SS

TEL AVIV

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005